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Establishment of an ad hoc advisory group on African countries emerging from conflict

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The proposal for an advisory group of the Economic and Social Council on African countries emerging from conflict emerged from the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group of the General Assembly on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa, and was endorsed by the Assembly in its resolution 55/217 of 21 December 2000. That resolution included a request that the Council consider the creation of an ad hoc advisory group on African countries emerging from conflict with a view to assessing humanitarian and economic needs and elaborating a long-term programme of support for implementation beginning with the integration of relief into development. In its high-level deliberations of July 2001 and the related ministerial declaration adopted on the role of the United Nations in support of the efforts of African countries to achieve sustainable development, the Council emphasized the importance of efforts for integrating peace and development. Regarding the advisory group, the Council requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of member States and to submit for its consideration a report with proposals on its mandate, composition and modalities of work. The present report responds to that request. Also relevant is the January 2002 public meeting of the Security Council on the situation in Africa and the resulting presidential statement (S/PRST/2002/2), in which the Security Council reaffirmed the importance of greater interaction with the Economic and Social Council.

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I. Introduction

1. Deliberations and resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council over the past several years have advanced the concept of a comprehensive approach to peace-building and have augmented international attention on the need for coordinated support for countries emerging from conflict. In order to translate such expressions of support by member States into the full range of required actions, it is becoming well-recognized that timely, country-specific responses are needed from the entire United Nations system — and from the broader donor community — that take into account the overall political context and its relationship to the peace-building effort and that integrate the various efforts to restore peace and support immediate and transitional assistance, reconstruction and longer-term development.

2. Strong engagement by the United Nations is needed to encourage, guide and support national and international efforts for peace-building. A clear need exists for greater coordination of priorities, programmes and related financial and technical support for broad-based recovery and reconstruction and to prevent the re-emergence of conflicts. Such engagement is especially needed in relation to the situation in a number of African countries.

3. The idea of an ad hoc advisory group of the Economic and Social Council — adaptable, country-specific and working through existing interdepartmental and inter-agency mechanisms, and recognizing the leading role of the concerned country itself — could add real value to the work of the United Nations. As a central intergovernmental body for coordination in the United Nations system, as well as for undertaking studies and making recommendations to other entities, the Council could play an important role vis-à-vis countries emerging from conflict by bringing its unique coordination role and responsibility to bear on peace-building and economic and social reconstruction. Further, its oversight role in matters of development cooperation and humanitarian assistance could have particular value in promoting better integration between the relevant policy and operational dimensions, thereby complementing ongoing work that takes place in the General Assembly and the Security Council.

4. The proposal for the advisory group emerged from the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group of the General Assembly on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa,[1] which was established to monitor the implementation of the recommendations contained in the related 1998 report of the Secretary-General (A/52/871-S/1998/318). The recommendation of the Working Group was subsequently endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 55/217 of 21 December 2000, was debated at the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council in July 2001 and became part of the resulting ministerial declaration on the role of the United Nations in support of the efforts of African countries to achieve sustainable development.[2]

5. In the ministerial declaration, the Council emphasized the importance of efforts for integrating peace and development, and called for a coordinated and comprehensive approach by all partners to support economic growth, reconstruction and recovery, peace-building, national efforts for promoting good governance and strengthening the rule of law. The Council further recalled that the General Assembly, in its resolution 55/217, had requested it to consider the creation of an ad hoc advisory group on countries emerging from conflict, with a view to assessing their humanitarian and economic needs and elaborating a long-term programme of support for implementation that begins with the integration of relief into development. To advance that process, the Council requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of member States and to submit a report for its consideration, with proposals on the mandate, composition and modalities of work of such an advisory group.

6. Also relevant to the present effort is the recent public meeting of the Security Council on the situation in Africa and the resulting presidential statement of 31 January 2002 (S/PRST/2002/2). By that statement, the Security Council reaffirmed the importance of strengthening its cooperation, through greater interaction, with the Economic and Social Council in the area of the prevention of armed conflicts, including in addressing economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems. The Security Council further underlined that economic rehabilitation and reconstruction constituted important elements in the long-term development of post-conflict societies and the maintenance of lasting peace, and called for greater international assistance in that regard. The Security Council recognized the need for adequate measures to

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prevent and resolve conflicts in Africa, including through setting up an ad hoc working group to monitor its recommendations and to enhance coordination with the Economic and Social Council.

7. The present report has been prepared after consultation with member States and relevant Secretariat departments, as well as United Nations funds and programmes and other organizations of the system. Section II sets out the context and rationale for this undertaking, section III outlines a set of possible elements of the proposed advisory group and its functions, and section IV contains concluding observations and recommendations for consideration by the Council.

II. Context and rationale

8. There has been significant progress of late in incorporating peace-building into the tools and instruments used by the United Nations system, although it has not yet been fully translated into effective support at the country level and necessary range of external partners has not yet been fully brought on board. An ad hoc advisory group of representatives of member States, which would be set up at the request of the country concerned, could work with national authorities of the country and subregion and with other stakeholders and partners: to foster a common approach that seeks and reflects the views of principal actors; to prepare assessments and recommend long-term programmes of support based on input from the United Nations system and others; and to help mobilize national and international support for peace and reconstruction.

9. The envisaged assessments and elaboration of programmes would draw together into a common perspective the work that is often done separately — through various mechanisms of the United Nations and the United Nations system; through bilateral and other multilateral initiatives; and through national programmes for reintegration, reconciliation, recovery and reconstruction.

10. The Economic and Social Council is in a position to draw upon the capacities of the entire United Nations system in this effort. This includes support from the Department of Political Affairs in its capacity as the United Nations focal point for post-conflict peace-building, the Executive Committee on Peace and Security, the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the Executive Committee for Economic and Social Affairs. Also relevant are the regional and subregional support available from the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA); the first-hand knowledge and experience of the United Nations funds, programmes and agencies through the resident coordinator/humanitarian coordinator system; and information and support from the specialized agencies, including the Bretton Woods institutions, individually and through the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination.

11. The proposed modality also builds upon the Council's earlier creation of an advisory group to assist in devising a long-term strategy and programme of support for Haiti, which was set up by its resolutions 1999/4 of 7 May 1999 and 1999/11 of 27 July 1999. That group, composed of five ambassadors of Economic and Social Council member States, met with United Nations departments and agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions, together with representatives of the Government of Haiti. The group made good use of existing machinery for assessing needs and planning support (see E/1999/103 and E/2000/63). Lessons learned from that experience would be applied to the new initiative. The Council would also build upon experiences and lessons learned from the increased cohesion that is currently being developed in the system and with other major actors in support of relief, recovery and reconstruction in Afghanistan.

12. The Economic and Social Council will need to coordinate with the Security Council in addressing the challenges of peace-building and in mobilizing support for the needs of countries emerging from conflict. In its recent presidential statement on the situation in Africa (S/PRST/2002/2), the Security Council welcomed the participation of the President of the Economic and Social Council in its debate, emphasized the critical importance of an early resumption of international cooperation and development assistance on behalf of countries where a peace process is being implemented, and stressed the related role of the donor community and the international financial institutions. Coordination between the two Councils in relation to Africa would give greater visibility and attention to countries emerging from conflict and help to mobilize

further high-level political support. Establishment of and linkages between the ad hoc working group of the Security Council and an ad hoc advisory group of the Economic and Social Council would be a concrete demonstration of how the integrated and complementary approach described in the Secretary-General's report on conflict, peace and development in Africa (A/52/871-S/1998/318) could take effect.

13. Also, the advisory group would respond to the need for a continuum in United Nations consideration, at the intergovernmental level, of situations at the country level. The advisory group may accordingly help to avoid gaps at the end of a peacekeeping mission.

14. The advisory group would take into account related resolutions and presidential statements of the Security Council, including those on specific peacekeeping missions and their winding-down phase, and those on broader issues such as women, peace and security (resolution 1325 (2000)) or on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. It would similarly take into account related General Assembly resolutions, including those on the provision of special economic assistance to individual countries and regions. It would, moreover, take into account consultations of groups of "friends of the Secretary-General" in relation to the country concerned and the consultations and contributions of other bilateral and multilateral groups, including the Organization of African Unity (African Union), subregional organizations and others.

15. In the New Partnership for Africa's Development, African leaders have set goals for themselves in promoting long-term conditions for development. This is an important step forward, and details are currently being fleshed out. In September 2002, the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly will conduct the final review and appraisal of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa. It is expected that the review will include discussions on how to formulate a coordinated response by the United Nations and the international community to the New Partnership for Africa's Development. The Economic and Social Council could make an important contribution to these processes by devising a means for enhancing the coordination of national and international actions in specific countries.

16. The approach taken in the advisory group would be responsive to the Partnership in its engagement with countries in Africa and the formulation of proposals for addressing the needs of such countries. It would, moreover, constitute an important contribution to the implementation of the commitments made in the Millennium Declaration (see General Assembly resolution 55/2), especially the section devoted to Africa.

III. Possible elements of a coordinated approach

17. In view of the foregoing considerations, the elements recommended for the consideration of the Economic and Social Council are outlined below.

18. Following a careful review of the situations of the African countries emerging from conflict and of the existing arrangements and initiatives for meeting their humanitarian, reconstruction and development needs, and taking into account the gaps, as well as the added value that the Economic and Social Council could provide as an intergovernmental body, the Council would, at the request of the country concerned, decide on setting up an ad hoc advisory group to deal with a country or subregional situation where there is a gap and it is felt that there is a need.

19. Such an advisory group would be set up for a limited time, and not as a standing body. It would not superimpose, replace or parallel other coordination structures, nor would it become a regular body for dealing with all African countries.

Mandate

20. Specifically, the advisory group would:

(a) Engage in consultations with and obtain the necessary information from relevant authorities, representatives and officials of national and international bodies and other organizations;

(b) Assess humanitarian and economic needs in the concerned country or subregion and prepare a long-term programme of support that aims at the integration of relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development into a comprehensive approach to peace and stability;

(c) Provide advice on how to ensure that the assistance of the international community in supporting the country or subregion concerned is adequate, coherent, well-coordinated and effective;

(d) Recommend its findings for adoption by the Economic and Social Council and for consideration in other appropriate settings. In doing so, the advisory group would take into account the unique character and needs of the country situations being considered.

Composition

21. The advisory group would be small and representative yet effective, consisting of a limited number of ambassadors drawn from the membership of the Council and its observers, based on the outcome of consultations among the regional groups. It may include countries that can make a particular contribution to the specific country under consideration. It would include representation from the country concerned.

22. The composition of the advisory group should be cognizant of the particular circumstances and dynamics, as well as of the culture and customs involved in the country concerned and in the subregion.

Modalities of work

23. The approach of the advisory group should be flexible, driven by the need to deliver positive results to the country concerned. It would need to be supported in the conduct of its work by the technical capabilities and instruments of the organizations and coordinating structures of the United Nations system, including consultations and cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions. The advisory group would draw upon lessons learned from the previous similar effort in relation to Haiti and from ongoing interdepartmental and inter-agency collaboration and cooperation between the United Nations and international financial institutions in relation to international support for Afghanistan. Coordination would be established with the Security Council's ad hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa.

24. The guiding principles of humanitarian engagement for the United Nations, the guiding principles of the New Partnership for Africa's Development and similar overarching United Nations principles would provide part of the framework for the work of the advisory group. Its proceedings would be open and transparent, allowing for contributions by any member State.

Consultations

25. The consultations would include the following:

(a) With national authorities of the country concerned: constant dialogue with official representatives and their involvement in all activities and meetings with political leaders and members of a broad spectrum of civil society;

(b) With officials of United Nations entities: briefings and support from the Department of Political Affairs as the United Nations focal point on peace-building and other Executive Committee on Peace and Security members, the United Nations Development Programme and other UNDG members, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other members of the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and other members of the Executive Committee for Economic and Social Affairs, the framework team for coordination, integrated mission task forces, ECA, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and other United Nations entities and specialized agencies involved in the countries;

(c) With officials of the Bretton Woods institutions and other international financial institutions: briefings and support from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the African Development Bank and others;

(d) With bilateral and multilateral actors and others: briefings and support from the Organization of African Unity (African Union), African subregional groups, donor countries and organizations, non-governmental organizations, private sector stakeholders, etc.

Working arrangements and instruments

26. In formulating its recommendations to the Economic and Social Council, the advisory group would take into account, and seek to advance in a more comprehensive manner, the country, subregional and regional programmes of the organizations of the United Nations system and those of bilateral and multilateral partners, as well as those of national, subregional and regional African and other initiatives and structures.

27. A key aim of the advisory group would be to enhance efficiency and promote synergy. With technical support from the United Nations system and

others, it would draw together into a common perspective and make maximum use of existing instruments and any related documentation. Within the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, these would include the United Nations generic guidelines on the strategic framework approach, the consolidated appeals process, the common country assessment, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, poverty reduction strategy papers, consultative group and round table mechanisms and other vehicles for coordination, support and funding.

28. In particular, the advisory group would draw upon the leadership role of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, where present, and the responsibilities of the United Nations resident coordinator/humanitarian coordinator, the country team and the United Nations system generally, including regular interaction with the World Bank and other organizations represented in the country.

29. In pursuing this approach, the Economic and Social Council would need to take into account relevant new initiatives, including, for example, the Inter-Agency Task Force on the West African Subregion, the United Nations Office for West Africa, the United Nations peace-building support offices, the World Bank's special programme of assistance for Africa, the special economic assistance to countries specified in relevant General Assembly resolutions, the groups of "friends of the Secretary-General" in relation to certain countries, and the ongoing efforts by development partners for various subregions.

Programme orientations and priorities

30. Following the country's own identified priorities and keeping in mind all three pillars of sustainable development — economic development, social development and protection of the environment — the needs assessments and programme of support would be designed to promote smooth transition and a comprehensive approach, with particular attention to linkages and filling gaps. Bearing in mind the differing circumstances and priority concerns in each country, the programme would cover the broad themes of peace-building in relation to sectoral and cross-cutting needs for immediate and transitional assistance and longer-term efforts that require early attention in order to facilitate capacity-building, the provision of services and capital investment. Of central importance would be the expression of national priorities in documentation emanating from a peace agreement and subsequent short- and longer-term agendas, complemented by the mechanisms and analyses of the United Nations and other external partners. Cross-cutting issues, such as the mainstreaming of gender concerns, human rights, the return of refugees and the situation of internally displaced persons, would receive particular attention.

Reporting to the Economic and Social Council

31. The advisory group would submit its report to the Economic and Social Council. The report would contain information and recommendations on the needs assessments and a comprehensive programme of support for long-term development for the country concerned. Following action by the Council, the documentation could be presented, as appropriate, to an international donors' conference for funding and to the participating organizations and Governments as the overall framework for future efforts.

IV. Concluding observations

32. The present report sets out the background, context and elements of, as well as the rationale for, a flexible and practical approach as to how the Economic and Social Council could use the modality of an ad hoc advisory group to promote a well-coordinated and comprehensive response to the challenges of peace-building in African countries emerging from conflict. **It is recommended that the Council endorse the proposals set out in section III above.**

33. By pursuing such an approach, the Council would highlight the importance of post-conflict peace-building and would emphasize the role that it could play for high-level political visibility and coordination. Such an approach would promote strengthened collaboration among the organizations of the United Nations system, the principal intergovernmental bodies, bilateral and multilateral actors and national authorities. It would allow the Council to respond to specific situations and needs in a flexible and time-limited manner, taking into account the unique characteristics of each situation. Such an approach could be tested in a pilot phase in one or two countries, to draw appropriate lessons and build upon them. It must be noted, however, that ultimately the effectiveness of the results will be determined by the extent of commitment forthcoming from national

authorities and international partners, and by the level and consistency of political and financial support provided for the implementation of such commitments.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 45* (A/55/45), para. 48.

[2] To be issued as *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/56/3), chap III.